

Customer Service

Recommendation 4B: Significantly increase investment in training and development, including continued training “regarding sensitivity, bias and court ethics.”

In its commentary the Commission noted “A motivated, well-trained staff is essential to first class customer service.”

The FY 08-09 Judicial Branch budget, approved by the legislature, includes an additional \$115,000 each year of the biennium for judicial and staff education to improve services to the public and increase productivity. With that appropriation, planning is now actively underway to target training for both judges and staff on issues highlighted by the Citizens Commission.

Customer Service

New employees are required to attend a half-day program on customer service and that program is offered on a voluntary basis to all employees. The Judicial Branch Education Committee (JBEC) is currently exploring development of a new customer service program for implementation in FY 2008.

Sensitivity Training (Customer Service & Productivity)

A training program will be conducted in FY 2008 to help staff learn how to interact effectively with court customers and to understand the issues these customers bring to court. The training programs will involve panels of "real people" with "real problems," a format that was used successfully in training new employees about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Professionals in the various areas, including defense lawyers and prosecutors, will participate in the program, which also will include tours of facilities, such as a prison or police training center.

In the fall of 2007, a short training program about workload analysis and productivity will be included in supervisor training.

Problem Solving and Creative Thinking

Clerks and Registers were required to attend a conference in April 2006, entitled "Reflections on Leadership." The plenary session was focused on problem solving and creative thinking, as were many of the breakout sessions. Segments on productivity will be part of the next clerks and registers conference.

In May 2007, a number of superior court clerks and deputies attended a daylong "Ethics Boot Camp" taught by SNHU Professor Annabel Beerel. Along with an analysis of ways to approach ethical dilemmas, problem solving and creative thinking was stressed.

Pro Se Litigants

The Judicial Branch has received a grant from the State Justice Institute to cover many of the expenses for a system-wide judges and masters' conference focusing on pro se litigants. This conference is scheduled for October 19.

A writing workshop in June 2007 for a small number of family division masters focused on writing court documents in language understandable to litigants who are not represented by lawyers.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues

Additional funding for FY08-09 is expected to fund a conference on substance abuse and mental health issues for judges and masters as well as others in related disciplines.

Two of our judges (Sadler, J., from Family Division and Leary, J. from District Court) have received some grant assistance and are registered to attend the National Judicial College course offered in September 2007 on litigants who present both substance abuse and mental health issues.

Performance Evaluations

Members of the staff education committee have formed a sub-committee to identify issues for conducting effective training programs on performance evaluation. A half-day presentation on performance evaluations is currently part of our supervisory training program.